

Inventory of the Pearl Primus Collection, circa 1920-1994

American Dance Festival Archives



American Dance Festival
Durham, North Carolina 27708-0772

Contact Information

American Dance Festival Archives
Box 90772
Durham, North Carolina
27708-0772 USA
Phone: 919-684-6402
Fax: 919-684-5459
E-mail: adfarchives@americandancefestival.org
URL: www.americandancefestival.org

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Detailed Description of the Collection

Title

Pearl Primus Collection, circa 1920-1994

Creator

Primus, Pearl

Extent

20.4 linear feet

Repository

American Dance Festival Archives

Location

For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the American Dance Festival Archives.

Abstract

Pearl Primus (1919-1994) was an African-American dancer, choreographer, anthropologist, and teacher. Collection includes materials created or collected by Primus from circa 1920 to 1994, including correspondence, writings, legal documents, research and teaching materials, clippings, programs, printed materials, photographs, sound recordings, films, videos, and artifacts.

Language

English.

Administrative Information**Access Restrictions**

Collection may contain restricted materials, including resumes. Patrons must sign the Acknowledgement of Legal Responsibility and Privacy Rights form before using this collection.

In off-site storage; 24 hours advance notice is required for use.

Sound recordings, films, videos, and some fragile paper materials require the use of access copies rather than the originals. Access copies and their locations in the collection are noted in the finding aid. Originals are restricted.

Use Restrictions

Copyright is retained by the authors of items in this collection, or their descendants, as stipulated by United States copyright law.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Pearl Primus Collection, American Dance Festival Archives.

Provenance

The Pearl Primus Collection was received by the American Dance Festival as gifts in 2000.

Processing Information

Processed by American Dance Festival Archives Staff

Completed October 29, 2004

Biographical Note

Pearl Primus (1919-1994) was an African-American dancer, choreographer, anthropologist, and teacher. She was born in Trinidad in 1919 and raised in New York City, where she attended Hunter High School from 1933 to 1937. Primus received a B.A. in biology from Hunter College in 1940, where she had been preparing for a career in medicine. However, when Primus began dancing with the New Dance Group, an integrated, politically progressive dance collective, her career goals shifted. Primus made her professional dance debut in New York City in 1943 to great critical acclaim. She began performing at the Café Society, an integrated nightclub, and in 1944 she gave her first solo recital, performing to poetry and the music of folksinger Josh White. Later that year she embarked on a tour of the American South, where she worked as a cotton-picker in order to learn more about the plight of African-Americans in the region, an experience that later inspired several dances.

In 1946, Primus took graduate classes in education at Columbia University while performing professionally with her own company and also in the New York revival of *Showboat* and the Chicago Civic Opera production of *Emperor Jones*. In 1949, Primus traveled to Africa on a grant from the Julius Rosenwald Foundation. She lived with tribes in Nigeria and the Belgian Congo, among others, observing and recording African dances, ceremonies, and other cultural activities and aspects of society.

In August 1950, she married Yael Woll and formally enrolled at Columbia University. Primus toured internationally both with her company and as a solo artist, performing in England for King George IV and Queen Mary in 1951, at the inauguration of Liberian President William V. S. Tubman in 1952, and with her company in Israel and France in 1952.

In early 1953, Primus separated from Woll. The following summer, Primus continued her studies of dance in Trinidad and met dancer and choreographer Percival Borde. They married in 1954, and Primus gave birth to their son, Onwin, in January 1955. Primus and Borde continued to perform and teach together until Borde's death in 1989.

Primus received a M.A. in educational sociology from New York University and was awarded a grant from the Rebecca Harkness Foundation to study in Africa in 1959. Upon her return to the U.S. in 1963, Primus founded the Primus-Borde School of Dance, where she developed methods for cross-cultural education through dance. Primus tested these methods in New York City elementary schools from 1965 through 1968 and published her findings for the U.S. Department of Education in 1968. Her highly regarded LP, *Pearl Primus' Africa*, was recorded to assist teachers in elementary and high schools.

In 1969, Primus was appointed professor at Hunter College, while she pursued a doctorate in anthropology at NYU. By proving that dance was an international language, Primus became the first NYU student to use dance to fulfill the language requirement. After completing her dissertation on the use of sculpture to acculturate children in the Mano tribe of Liberia, Primus received her Ph.D. in anthropology in 1978. She began the

Pearl Primus Dance Language Institute to disseminate her methods of blending African-American, Caribbean, and African influences with modern dance and ballet techniques. Percival Borde died on August 31, 1979, in New York.

Primus was appointed director of the Cora P. Maloney College at SUNY-Buffalo in 1982, where she taught for two years. From 1984 to 1990, Primus served as a professor of ethnic studies and artist-in-residence at the Five College Consortium in Massachusetts. In the following years, Primus was in residency at Howard University, taught at NYU, and worked towards the founding of the Pearl Primus Dance Arts Foundation

Primus received many awards for her diverse achievements, including a Star of Africa decoration from Liberian government and the Scroll of Honor from the National Council of Negro Women. In 1991, President George H. W. Bush honored Primus with the National Medal of Arts, awarded for "outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support and availability of the arts in the United States." Primus' other awards include the Distinguished Service Award from the Association of American Anthropologists in 1985, an honorary doctorate from Spelman College in 1988, the American Dance Festival's first Balasaraswati/Joy Ann Dewey Beinecke Chair for Distinguished Teaching in 1991 and, posthumously, the American Dance Festival/Scripps Award for Lifetime Achievement in Choreography. Primus died in New Rochelle, NY, in 1994.

Collection Overview

Collection includes materials created or collected by Primus from circa 1920 to 1994, including correspondence, writings, legal documents, research and teaching materials, clippings, programs, printed materials, photographs, sound recordings, films, videos, and artifacts.

The Pearl Primus Collection is organized into eight series: Correspondence, Subject Files, Dissertation Materials, Printed Materials, Photographic Materials, Moving Images, Sound Recordings, and Artifacts.

Subject Headings

These and related materials may be accessed under the following subject headings.

- Primus, Pearl.
- African American dance.
- Choreographers--United States.
- Dance--United States.
- Ethnology--Africa.
- Modern dance--United States.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Correspondence, 1937-1994 and undated

Box 1

Pearl Primus, 1937-1938, 1947-1994 and undated

Extent: .75 linear foot

Arrangement: Chronological

Includes letters to Primus from family, friends, fans, and academic colleagues, and letters from Primus to company members, government officials, educators, and funding organizations, among others. Writings, project proposals, invitations, and printed materials are also present. There is extensive correspondence from 1949 documenting her experience in Africa, especially in Liberia. Other significant correspondence includes letters written in 1953 to Primus from her future husband, Percival Borde, relating details of their relationship and his immigration to the United States from Trinidad. The 1960s and 1970s are not well represented, although some correspondence exists regarding Primus' dance work and her study on dance for children conducted in New York elementary schools. The 1980s is well represented and provides insight into Primus' professional activities as a faculty member at SUNY-Albany, SUNY-Buffalo, and the Five College Dance Department.

Box 1

Onwin Primus-Borde, 1987

Extent: 1 folder, 1 item

Box 1

Percival Borde, 1956, 1962-1964

Extent: 1 folder

Subject Files, 1934-1994 and undated

Extent: 4 linear feet

Arrangement: Alphabetical

Contains materials created or collected by Primus (and occasionally Borde) including correspondence, printed materials, notes, writings, and other materials. Prevalent are materials from Primus' second trip to Africa sponsored by the Rebekah Harkness Foundation, including receipts, expense lists, notes, writings, poetry, project proposals, and memorabilia. Borde's activities in Africa during that time are documented by similar materials, as well as in diaries, travel documents, and permits. Materials related to Primus' academic career, from high school student to college professor, including lecture notes and assignments, are in the Notebooks and Notes subject folders. Course materials

primarily date to Primus' tenure on the faculty of the Five College Dance Department and at SUNY-Buffalo's Cora P. Maloney College. Articles, reports, and handwritten or unpublished typescript essays are in the Writings subject folders. Primus' daily life is characterized by personal notes, schedules, itineraries, and six diaries, which contain Primus' daily "to do" lists as well as shopping and correspondence lists and some financial information. Occasionally they contain brief musings or phrases of poetry she composed.

Box 1

Africa, 1949, 1960 and undated

Box OS1

Africa, Liberia: Invitations and Programs, Presidential Events, 1949, 1952

Box 1

Africa, Liberia: Liberian Cultural Affairs Committee, 1960

Africa, Nigeria: International Club Brochure, 1949

Box OS1

Africa, Printed Materials: *The Liberian Age* (11 issues), 1948-1949

Africa, Printed Materials: *New York Times* supplement on Liberia, July 25, 1965

Africa, Printed Materials: *New York Times Magazine*, March 14, 1965

Africa, Printed Materials: *Sierra Leone Trade Industry & Travel*, 1959

Africa, Printed Materials: *Weekend Telegraph* (U.K.), 1964

Box 1

Alma John Workshops, 1984

American Dance Festival (Black Tradition in American Modern Dance project),
1988

Box OS3

Artwork by Primus, circa 1955

Artwork of Primus (Illegible signature), undated

Box 1

Awards and Certificates, circa 1935, 1970-1988

Box OS2

Awards and Certificates, 1985

Box 1

Barbados Dance Theatre and Five College Dance Department Exchange, 1985-
1988

Barbados Workshops, 1986-1988

Biographical Information and Resumes, 1968-1990 and undated

Borde, Onwin: Awards and Certificates, 1980

Borde, Percival: Dorothea Towles, 1962

Box OS1

Borde, Percival: Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago Cultural Society, 1962

Box 1

Borde, Percival: Writings, circa 1962

Box OS1

Borde, Percival: Writings, Diaries, 1962

Box 1

- Children's Theatre Company, 1984
- Contact Information (address lists and business cards), undated
- Box OS1
 - Contact Information (address lists), undated
 - Contracts and Correspondence, Lordly and Dame, 1986-1989
- Box 1
 - Course Materials, circa 1963-1987
 - Course Materials: Student Papers, 1988, 1992
 - Course Materials: Syllabi, 1984-1994
- Box OS1
 - Course Materials: Syllabus, 1985
- Box 1
 - Course Materials: Test and Lecture Notes, 1987, 1991 and undated
 - The Dance Project (WNET), 1987-1990
 - Everybody's Creative Arts Center (CitiCentre Dance Theatre), 1984-1986
- Box 5
 - Greeting card by Primus, 1934. Restricted
- Box 1
 - Reference Copy: Greeting card by Primus, 1934
 - Howard University Residency, 1992
 - Hunter College Employment, 1969-1973
 - Italy, 1956 Oct.-Dec.
 - Kwanzaa Speech Notes, 1986
- Box OS1
 - Kwanzaa Student Project, 1983
- Box 1
 - Ledger, 1963
 - Legal Affairs: Contracts, 1951-1989
 - Legal Documents: Eviction Proceedings, 1963, 1984
 - Legal Documents: Immigration, 1937, 1957-1958
- Box OS1
 - Legal Documents: Marriage Certificate and Divorce Decrees, 1961
- Box 2
 - Legal Documents: Onwin Borde, 1955, 1978
 - Legal Documents: Permits and Licenses, 1951, 1960-1961
 - Memorabilia, 1940-1976 and undated
 - Memorabilia: Postcards, undated
 - Miscellaneous, 1948-1986 and undated
 - National Council for Culture and Art, 1980
 - National Endowment for the Arts, 1985-1994
 - New York University, Fifth International Festival, 1964
 - Notebook, circa 1951
 - Notebooks: Africa, circa 1958-1963
 - Notebook, circa 1965
 - Notebook, 1977-1981
 - Notebook, circa 1987-1988

Notebook, circa 1992
Notes: Africa, circa 1949-1960
Notes: Africa, Bushongo and Watusi, undated
Notes: African-American History and Heritage, undated
Notes: African-American Women, undated
Notes: African Art, undated

Box OS1
Notes: Anthropology, undated

Box 2
Notes: Caribbean, undated

Box OS1
Notes: Choreography, Dance, circa 1950-1959

Box 2
Notes: Choreography, Dance, undated
Notes: Cora P. Maloney College, undated
Notes: Dance Presentation for Children Study, undated
Notes: First African Performing Arts Center (Konoma Kende), undated

Box OS1
Notes: First African Performing Arts Center (Konoma Kende), undated
Notes: Personal, undated

Box 2
Notes: Personal and Professional (2 folders), circa 1950-1980

Box OS1
Pearl Primus-Percival Borde School of Dance, 1968
Poetry, Music, Lyrics by Primus
Project Proposals: African-Caribbean-American Dance-Arts Center, circa 1955

Box 2
Project Proposals: African-Caribbean-American Dance-Arts Center, 1957-1958
Project Proposals: First African Dance Theatre, circa 1958
Project Proposals: Pearl Primus Dance Language Institute, undated
Project Proposals by Primus, 1955-1989 and undated
Project Proposals by Others, 1987 and undated
Publishing Correspondence, 1950-1951
Rebekah Harkness Foundation Tour of Africa: Financial, 1961-1962
Rebekah Harkness Foundation Tour of Africa: Primus Miscellaneous, 1961-1962
Rebekah Harkness Foundation Tour of Africa: Borde Miscellaneous, 1961-1962

Box OS1
Rebekah Harkness Foundation Tour of Africa: Proposal and Description, 1962
and undated

Box 2
Receipts, 1952-1957 and undated
Receipts: Nigeria, 1948 Dec.-1949 Apr.
Receipts: Belgian Congo, 1949 May-Aug
Schedules and Itineraries, 1949-circa 1992 and undated
School Essays, 1935-circa 1940 and undated
School Notes: Biology, undated

- School Notes: Biology, Botany, 1938 and undated
- School Notes: Dance, undated
- School Notes: English Literature, undated
- School Notes: Physical Education, 1938 and undated
- School Notes: Primitive Art, 1953
- School Notes: Psychology, undated
- School Notes: Roman History, undated
- SISA (Sisterhood in Support of Sisters in South Africa), 1986-1987
- Spelman College Inauguration and Symposium, 1988
- Spiritual Baptists, Granville Williams, 1984-1988
- Symposium: The Struggle for Liberation in Southern Africa, 1983
- Travel Documents (including passports and permits), 1948-1963
- White, Josh, 1983-1984 and undated
- Writings, undated
- Box OS1
 - Writings: Africa, 1962
- Box 2
 - Writings: Africa, undated
 - Writings: "African Dance", 1963
 - Writings: "An Evaluation Report on Cultural Enrichment Through the Dance", 1967
 - Writings: Dance, undated
- Box 5
 - Writings: Diary, circa 1943-1949. Restricted
- Box 2
 - Reference Copy: Writings: Diary, circa 1943-1949
- Box 3
 - Writings: Diary, 1944
 - Writings: Diary, 1949
- Box 5
 - Writings: Diary, circa 1956. Restricted
- Box 3
 - Reference Copy: Writings: Diary, circa 1956
 - Writings: Diary, 1957
 - Writings: Diary, circa 1960
 - Writings: Poetry, Lyrics, and Music, undated
- Box 5
 - Writings: "Tree Worship", 1934. Restricted
- Box 3
 - Reference Copy: Writings: "Tree Worship", 1934
- Box 5
 - Writings: Diary by M. Hull, 1979. Restricted
- Box 3
 - Writings: By Others, 1960-1991 and undated
 - Writings: By Others about Primus, 1979, 1982 and undated
 - Writings: Poetry, Lyrics, and Music by Others, 1928, 1965, and undated

Writings: Woll, Yael, English Composition notebook, 1938

Dissertation Materials, 1959-1977 and undated

Extent: .5 linear foot, 21 folders

Arrangement: Proposal drafts are followed by drafts of chapters or sections, followed by folders devoted to illustrations, bibliographies, research materials, and correspondence. Drafts of chapters and sections are presented in the same order as the table of contents of the most complete draft of the dissertation. The identification of some materials as part of Primus' dissertation proposal is sometimes uncertain; likewise, some materials filed as a draft of a chapter of the dissertation may possibly be a draft of proposal chapters or sections.

Contains various drafts of Primus' doctoral dissertation at New York University entitled "A Study of Sculpture-Danced as a Factor in the Enculturation of the Mano People of Liberia, West Africa, Between 1948 and 1963." The final version of the dissertation is not included. Also included are photocopies of research materials and illustrations used in the dissertation. Primus began her research in Liberia during the tour sponsored by Rosenwald Foundation in 1949, continued it during a brief visit to Liberia in 1952, and continued it again from 1959 to 1963. Primus' dissertation proposal, begun in 1959, was approved in 1975. Her doctorate was awarded in 1978 upon completion of the dissertation.

Box 3

Proposal Drafts, 1959, 1975 and undated
Drafts, Chapters 1 and 2
Drafts, Chapters 1-4, 1975
Drafts, Foreword, Preface, Dedication
"Through the Eyes of the Investigator"
"The Republic of Liberia, West Africa"
"Africa"
"Methodology" (Chapter 3)
"Ethnography" (Chapter 4)
"Dance" (Chapter 4 of final dissertation)
"The Enculturation Process Among the Mano People" (Chapter 5)
"When Sculpture-Danced Danced" (Chapter 6)
"Implications of the Study" (Chapter 7)
"Related Studies"
Drafts, sections unidentified
Illustrations
Bibliography
Rosenwald Fellowship Correspondence, 1948-1960
Dissertation-Related Correspondence, 1975-1977 and undated
Research Materials
Handwritten Notes and Drafts

Printed Materials, circa 1935-1995

Extent: 4.3 linear feet

Arrangement: Chronological in two subseries: printed materials pertaining to Primus or her family members, and printed materials collected by Primus that do not specifically mention her or her family.

Primus and Family, circa 1940-1994

Contains programs, clippings, promotional materials, reviews, publications, announcements, flyers, press releases, and other items that specifically mention Primus or her immediate family, including Percival Borde and Onwin Primus-Borde, as well as performances of students Primus advised, groups she directed, dances she choreographed, and shows she lent costumes. Also included are articles and publications that Primus authored.

Box OS1

Program Drafts, circa 1940-1959

Box 3

1941-1960 (20 folders)

Box OS2

1944-1985 (3 folders)

Box 4

1961-1994 (32 folders)

Collected by Primus, circa 1935-1994

Contains printed materials that Primus collected but that do not specifically mention her or her family, including popular periodicals, newspaper clippings, programs, and miscellaneous brochures.

Box 4

circa 1935-1994 (16 folders)

Box OS2

Rat newspaper, 1968

Box OS3

Large poster for "Master Class", 1974 or 1985

Photographic Materials, circa 1920-1992 and undated

Prints, circa 1920-1992 and undated

Arrangement: Prints are arranged into four subseries: Portraits, Publicity, Performance, and Snapshots. Folder titles identify either the subject of the photo or the title of the dance depicted, followed by the date. When known, the photographer's name appears in parentheses.

Portraits, circa 1920-1992

Portraits of Primus, circa 1920-1992

Extent: 15 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

Box 6

Primus, circa 1920

Primus, circa 1930-1949 (2 folders)

Primus, circa 1940-1949

Primus (Cris Alexander), circa 1940-1945 (3 folders)

Box OS2

Primus (Cris Alexander), circa 1940-1945

Box 6

Primus (Gerda Peterich), circa 1940-1949

Primus (Shelburne Studios), circa 1940-1949

Primus (Carl Van Vechten), circa 1940-1949

Primus (photograph of painting by Robert G. Thomkins),
1950

Primus (photograph of bust by Ben Karp), circa 1950-1959

Primus, Percival, and Onwin Borde passport photos, circa
1961

Primus, Afro-American Studies Department, University of
Massachusetts-Amherst, 1992

Portraits of Others, circa 1940-1969

Extent: 2 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

Box 6

Others, signed or identified, circa 1940-1959

Others, unidentified, circa 1940-1969

Publicity, circa 1940-1969

Primus in Performance, circa 1940-1959

Extent: 25 folders

Arrangement: Alphabetical by title of dance

Contains publicity shots of Primus (sometimes with her company or family), depicting scenes from dance performances, taken by professional photographers for promotional purposes.

Box 6

African Ceremonial (Gerda Peterich), circa 1944 (2 folders)
Afro-Haitian Play Dance (Gerda Peterich), circa 1940-1949

Box OS2

Hard Times Blues, 1940

Box 6

Dance of the Watusi, 1951

Folk Dance, PM Daily Picture Magazine (Morris Gordon), 1944

Folk Dance (Gerda Peterich), circa 1944

Folk Dance (Jay Florian Mitchell), circa 1950-1959

Folk Dance (Gerda Peterich), circa 1950-1959

Negro Speaks of Rivers, circa 1940-1949 (3 folders)

Box OS2

Negro Speaks of Rivers, circa 1940-1949

Box 6

Negro Speaks of Rivers (Gerda Peterich), circa 1940-1949 (2 folders)

Spirituals, circa 1940-1949

Box 7

Unidentified Dances, circa 1940-1959 (9 folders)

Unidentified Dances (Barbara Morgan), circa 1950-1959

Unidentified Dances, with Joe Nash (Gerda Peterich), circa 1947

Primus Company, circa 1940-1959

Extent: 11 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

Contains publicity shots of Primus company members in performance and in rehearsal.

Box 7

Primus Company, circa 1940-1949 (2 folders)

Primus Company (Barry), circa 1940-1949

Box OS2

Primus Company (Barry), circa 1940-1949

Box 7

Primus Company (Scurlock Studio), circa 1940-1949

Primus Company, *Caribbean Conga* (Gjon Mili), circa 1940-1949

Primus Company, *Caribbean Conga* (Jay Florian Mitchell), circa 1940-1949

Box OS2

Primus Company, *Caribbean Conga* (Jay Florian Mitchell), circa 1940-1949

Box 7

Primus Company, Four Male Dancers (Marvin Smith),
circa 1940-1949
Primus Company, Rehearsal (Gazelle Szabo), circa 1940-
1949
Primus Company with Joe Nash and Jacqueline Hairston
(Marvin Smith), circa 1940-1949
Primus Company, donkey costume (Jay Florian Mitchell),
circa 1950-1955
Primus Company, circa 1950-1959

Public Appearances by Primus, circa 1940-1969

Extent: 40 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

Contains publicity shots taken at public appearances and events.

Box 7

Radio appearance, circa 1940-1949
Radio appearance, NBC (Dennis Stock), circa 1940-1949
Radio appearance, WHN (Irving Kaufman), circa 1940-
1949
Saks Fifth Avenue Store Window (Worsinger), circa 1940-
1949
Appearances, circa 1940-1989
War Effort, with CIO member/veterans, circa 1942-1944
Café Society, circa 1943
Emperor Jones, 1947
Packing for Africa (Rosenwald Grant) (Rosalie
Gwathmey), 1949
Signing Autographs (Beckman), 1947
Belgian Congo, 1949
Primus with Family (Rosalie Gwathmey), 1949
Women Dancers in Nigeria, 1949
Jacob's Pillow, 1950
Primus with Percival Borde, circa 1950-1959
Primus with Francis Day, Jack Hylton reading program of
Primus' royal performance, 1951 Oct. 29
Appearance in U.K., (Keystone Press Agency), 1951 Oct.
Appearance In U.K (Daily Express), circa 1951
Israeli tour (Hans Kaufmann), 1952 Jan.
Trieste, Italy, 1956 Oct.-Nov.
Primus with Percival Borde and Curtis J. Perkins (R.
Walker), circa 1956
Appearance with Onwin Borde, circa 1960
Appearance, circa 1960-1969

Appearance at Detroit Institute of the Arts, circa 1960-1969
Primus with Percival Borde and Nun, circa 1960-1969

Box OS2

Primus teaching children, circa 1960-1969

Box 8

Primus with Nigerian Cultural Leaders, circa 1961

Percival Borde presenting award, circa 1962

Percival Borde with Miss Trinidad and Tobago
Independence, 1962 Sept.

Press clipping: "Everyman's African Roots," *Dance Magazine*, 1964 Oct.

"Dancing Masks of Africa" Exhibit Opening, 1974 Sept.

Spelman College Repertory Workshop, *Swing Low* (Reeves Studios), 1976

Primus (Sigrid Estrada), circa 1982

Contact Magazine shoot (Stephen Long), 1984

Lecture Demonstration at Amherst (Frank Ward), circa
1986

American Dance Festival Master Class (Jay Anderson),
1988

Primus with Kim Bears, circa 1988

Lecture Demonstration (Andre Richardson), circa 1980-
1989

National Medal of Arts (Vivian Ronay), 1991

Photographs of Others, circa 1940-1969

Extent: 2 folders

Box 8

Photographs of others, identified, circa 1940-1969

Photographs of others, unidentified, circa 1940-1969

Performance, circa 1940-1989 and undated

Extent: 45 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

Includes photographs of Primus, her family, and her company taken by a professional photographer at live performances.

Performances, circa 1940-1979

Prayer of Thanksgiving, Belgian Congo (A. Da Cruz), 1949

Belgian Congo (A. Da Cruz), circa 1949 May-Aug.

Dance of Lightning, Belgian Congo (A. Da Cruz), circa 1949 May-
Aug.

Jacob's Pillow, 1950

Cleveland Performance (Bill Wingfield), circa 1950-1959
International Festival, circa 1950-1959
English Tour, 1951
Primus Company, circa 1951
Italian tour (Foto Florio), 1956
Italian tour (E. Constantine), 1956
Italian tour (L. de Rota), circa 1956 Oct.-Nov.
Primus with Percival Borde, NYU-TV (Irwin Gooen), 1957
Percival Borde, circa 1960-1969
Primus Company, circa 1960-1969
NYU (William Simmons), 1962
Appearance (Bro. David McAdams), 1964 June 25
Alphonse Cimber, Primus Company drummer (E. Pen Stevens)
1969 Oct. 11
Percival Borde, Primus Company, Lincoln Center Out-Of-Doors
Festival (Dan Brinzac), 1979 Aug. 20
Percival Borde, circa 1970-1979
Percival Borde, *Impinyuza*, circa 1970-1979
Primus with Onwin Borde, circa 1970-1979
Performance, circa 1980-1989
Performance, circa 1980-1989
Performance, circa 1980-1989
Unidentified Performers, circa 1980-1989
Excerpts from an African Journey, Five College Faculty Dance
Concert, 1984
Mary François Brooks and Co., 1986
Primus Company, undated
Primus Company (Costas), undated
Primus Company, *Initiation*, undated
Primus Company, *Bushasche*, undated

Snapshots, circa 1930-1992

Extent: 40 folders

Arrangement: Chronological

Includes photographs taken by non-professional, unidentified photographers. The images document Primus' family and friends, as well as some performances and appearances.

Box 9

Emily and Edward Primus (parents), circa 1930-1939

Others, circa 1930-1959

Hunter College, Friends, circa 1937

Primus, circa 1937-1950

Primus with Family and Friends, circa 1937-1960

Albums, including Father and Hunter College friend, 1938-1939

Primus' Brothers and Sisters-in-Law, circa 1940-1949
Others, signed, 1949
Others, unidentified, 1949, 1959-1963
Primus in Africa, circa 1949
Watusi (Rwanda), circa 1949
Primus at Café Society Downtown, 1950
Yael Woll, circa 1950-1953
Album, circa 1952
Trinidad, circa 1953
Trinidad albums, circa 1953 (5 folders)
Onwin Borde (with Primus and Percival Borde), 1955
Africa, circa 1959-1963 (2 folders)
Liberia, circa 1959-1963
Onwin Borde, 1961
Liberia, 1961
Classes, circa 1965
Percival Borde, Lagos, Nigeria, 1971
Onwin Borde drumming, circa 1980-1989
Lecture Demonstration, Emory University, Atlanta, circa 1980-1989
Panel Discussion, circa 1980-1989
Primus with Marilyn Middleton, circa 1980-1989
Primus at White Plains High School, circa 1980-1989
Shango de Ima, circa 1980-1989
Unidentified, circa 1980-1994
Primus at Murray and Peggy Schwartz's home, 1983
Students, Dance Workshop, 1984 Apr. 6

Box 10

Primus with Maya Angelou and Onwin Borde, 1987
Primus and Shepard Roderick, Barbados, circa 1987
Primus at Murray and Peggy Schwartz's home, 1989
Tokunaga Dance Kompany, Boston, circa 1992

Contact Sheets, circa 1940-1984

Extent: 8 folders

Arrangement: Chronological in the same subseries as Photographic Prints: Publicity, Performance, and Snapshots.

None of the contact sheets in this series has its accompanying negatives. There are, however, a few contact sheets with their accompanying negatives in the Negatives series.

Publicity, circa 1940-1959

Box 10

Primus and Company (or students), circa 1940-1949

Primus Company Rehearsal, circa 1950-1959

Performance, circa 1940-1984

Box 10

Primus, circa 1940-1949
Primus at Jacob's Pillow, 1950
Onwin Borde, circa 1965
Primus with unidentified company, 1984

Snapshots, circa 1950-1959

Box 10

Primus, circa 1950-1959
Primus, Percival Borde, Onwin Borde, circa 1958

Negatives, circa 1930-1988 and undated

Extent: 14 folders

Arrangement: Chronological in the same subseries as Photographic Prints: Portraits, Publicity, Performance, and Snapshots. Primus' negatives from her trips to Africa are arranged in a separate following series.

Contains some of the negatives of prints found Photographic Prints subseries. There are also numerous snapshots of family members with Onwin Borde, primarily during his infant and toddler years, 1955-1957. Other negatives include performances of Primus and other well-known modern dancers such as Jose Limon and Helen Tamiris at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in 1950.

Portraits, circa 1945

Box 10

Primus, circa 1945

Publicity, circa 1945-1988

Box 10

Spirituals, circa 1945
Primus, circa 1945-1988

Performance, 1949-1950

Box 10

Dance of Lightning and Prayer of Thanksgiving, 1949
Limon, Ide, Helen, Cimber, Lindquist, Rivera, Jacob's Pillow,
1950

Dance of Lightning and The Negro Speaks of Rivers, Jacob's
Pillow, 1950
Primus, Jacob's Pillow, 1950

Snapshots, circa 1930-1965 and undated

Box 10

Unidentified, circa 1930-1949
Primus and family, 1955-1957
Children, including Onwin Borde, circa 1955-1959
Percival Borde and Onwin Borde, circa 1960
Onwin Borde, circa 1960
Onwin Borde, circa 1965
Primus and Percival Borde, undated

Primus' Ethnographic Studies from Africa, 1949, 1960-1963

The bulk of this subseries consists of negatives taken by Primus in Africa in 1949 and 1960-1963. They document the people, landscapes, vegetation, habitats, crafts, instruments, dance, dress, and rituals of the African tribes she visited.

Negatives Identified by Primus, 1949, 1960-1963

Extent: 16 folders

Arrangement: The negatives in this subseries were contained in an index card box and identified by Primus according to city or subject, although they were not arranged in their current alphabetical order.

Box 10

Aba (Nigeria)
Benin (Nigeria)
Boma (Belgian Congo)
Bonny (Nigeria)
Duala (Cameroon)
Ife (Nigeria)

Box 11

Jos (Nigeria)
Kalabar (Nigeria)
Kano (Nigeria)
Lagos (Nigeria)
Missions
Oron (Nigeria)
Ship
Usumbura (Burundi)
Warri (Nigeria)
Zaria (Nigeria)

Negatives not Identified by Primus, 1949

Extent: 23 folders

Arrangement: The negatives in this subseries were tentatively identified or categorized by ADF Archives staff and arranged alphabetically by tribe or subject.

The majority of these negatives likely date to Primus' 1949 Rosenwald Foundation grant tour.

Box 11

- Ashanti [?] (Ghana)
- Bakuba (Belgian Congo) (4 folders)
- Flora and Fauna
- Ife [?] (Nigeria)
- Kampo [?] (Senegal)
- Mano (Liberia) (3 folders)
- Material Culture (2 folders)
- Primus
- Watusi (Rwanda) (4 folders)
- Unidentified Children
- Unidentified People (4 folders)

Transparencies not Identified by Primus, 1949, 1960-1962

Extent: 2 folders

Arrangement: The transparencies in this subseries were tentatively identified or categorized by ADF Archives staff and arranged alphabetically by tribe or subject.

Box 11

- Accra (Ghana), circa 1962
- Bakuba (Belgian Congo)

Moving Images, circa 1949-1992

Extent: 22 items,

Arrangement: By format and then by item number, as assigned by the staff of *Free to Dance*.

Includes 15 reels of 8mm film, primarily containing images of Africa shot by Primus in either 1949 or 1960 to 1963. This series also contains amateur VHS footage of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre rehearsing Primus' *Impinyuza* and of a speech Primus presented at Howard University in 1992. Also present is an interview with Primus conducted for the Standifer Oral History Archive in 1989, as well as a 1981 feature on Primus by Schenectady PBS affiliate WMHT. Titles are transcribed from the original label on each item.

Viewing of these materials requires the use of reference copies. When a reference copy exists, it is noted in the finding aid. Originals are restricted.

8 mm Film, circa 1949-1969

Films marked with an asterisk* are also represented on Reference Copy DVD #4781 (Box 16), Preservation Copy Betacam SP #4781 (Box 13), and Preservation Copy DigiBeta #4781 (Box 13). Originals and preservation copies are restricted.

Box 12

- 051-01-5 "50' B/W Bullfight"*
- 051-03-5 "dancing outside, in front of two doors-very light"
- 051-04-5 "Great Wall, Donkeys, Looks like more African dancing, 1960s"*
- 051-05-5 "Native Guitar, Street in Lagos"
- 051-06-5 "Pearl at Jacob's Pillow"
- 051-07-5 "Bullfight, color"*
- 051-08-5 "50' B/W, good exposure. Probably not Africa-people coming out of buildings"
- 051-09-5 "50' color Bullfight"*
- 051-10-5 "looks like female African standing, then dancing in road. Full roll"
- 051-11-5 "dancing, color. Soloist in white skirt"*
- 051-14-5 "sheep or cow under a tree"*
- 051-15-5 "color-very light"*
- 051-16-5 "the road, shot from inside a car, color"*
- 051-17-5 "date: 1958 house/hut/tent color"*
- 051-18-5 "person standing in front of stairs"*

VHS Videocassettes, 1989-1992 and undated

Videocassettes marked with an asterisk* are represented on individual reference copy DVDs (Box 16) and individual preservation copy Betacam SP videocassettes (Box 13). Originals and preservation copies are restricted.

Box 13

- 051-12-4 "Pearl Primus in Africa"*
- 051-13-4 "Sathi Ailey *Impinyuza*-Sun. 10/21 TRT: 23:22 5/21/92"*
- 051-14-4 "Luncheon at Howard University 1992"*
- 051-15-4 "*Impinyuza* Rehearsal 8/7/90"
- 051-16-4 "Dr. Pearl Primus Interviewed by James Standifer", 1989 Feb.

U-Matic Videocassettes, 1981

These two tapes are represented on a single reference copy DVD (Box 16) and two individual preservation copy Betacam SP videocassettes (Box 13). Originals and preservation copies are restricted.

Box 13

"Pearl Primus, Mon. 4/20/81", WMHT-NY (2 videocassettes)

Recorded Sound, 1950-1989 and undated

Extent: 68 items

Arrangement: Arranged by format and by identifying numbers assigned by ADF staff.

Contains 1/4-inch reel-to-reel audiotapes and audiocassettes belonging to Primus, including interviews with Primus in 1950 and 1956 and a lecture-demonstration on "Dance and Life Crisis." This series also contains a copy of *Pearl Primus' Africa*, a set of three phonograph records of African stories, proverbs, and songs that Primus narrated, as well as copies of four other native music LPs. Also included are recordings of chants, drumming, and singing likely used to accompany rehearsals, or perhaps made to preserve native songs and rhythms for future study, although these are largely unidentified. Home recordings and duplicates of popular music, including Josh White, Miles Davis, Langston Hughes, and Billie Holiday, are also included.

Titles are copied from the original labels on the boxes of the sound reels and audiocassettes. Additional notes appear in brackets, including spelled-out abbreviations and uncertain readings of illegible titles.

Listening to these materials requires the use of reference copies. Sound recordings marked with an asterisk* are also represented on individual reference copy audio CDs (Box 16). Originals are restricted.

1/4-Inch Reel-to-Reel Audiotapes, 1950-1988 and undated

Box 14

PPCAud1 "Fanti + Group/Fanga"*

PPCAud2 "Shango Songs"*

PPCAud3 "Priorities"*

PPCAud4 "Hard Times Blues 6/88"

PPCAud5 "Fanga"*

PPCAud6 "P. Primus Lecture Coldstream"*

PPCAud7 "George Carvell, Hoffman Elementary School, Hoffman and
Church St., Elmira, NY 14905"

PPCAud8 Unidentified

PPCAud9 Unidentified

PPCAud10 Unidentified

PPCAud11 "Aug-Sept 1955, Music and Talk-Pearl, Percy, Hada[mar?] Nul[tor?], 1st part Carr[icecon] [Sonny, Arnette]-Sept. 22/55, Belle pique, Cocoa oh Cocoa, Rock Daniel, Rattle"*

PPCAud12 "Newark 7/9/57"*

PPCAud13 "Round Table Discussion, African Theater Arts, P.P. and P.B. [Pearl Primus and Percival Borde], [Ezra Koli?], P. Reynolds, W. Edwards, L. Jones, 11/2/73"*

PPCAud14 "St. Marks 1/hour 5 weeks 9/23 to 10/26, Bondi + Company, Primus Guest Artist"*

PPCAud15 "Records of [James and ?] with K. [Heldek?] Shango"*

PPCAud16 Unidentified*

PPCAud17 "Nights in Latin America-Rumba"

PPCAud18 Unidentified*

PPCAud19 "Jack Lathrop 1951, Pearl Primus, Conn. Coll., Aug. 1950"*

PPCAud20 "Radio Interview P. Primus, Callinda Drumming, Sam and [Tiny?], Pearl Primus, 17 W. 24th Studio, Sun. April 8, 1956"*

PPCAud21 "Recording of Drums and Singing By K. Ablack"*

PPCAud22 Unlabeled. Letter from Koko to Primus identifies reel as recordings by Koko given to Primus. Original letter is in Correspondence, undated*

PPCAud23 "May 56 Speed Slow, Blue Sands-Buddy Collet [Collette], June 12 56, 'Dance off Buddy Fantaloon Dance Off' Onwin Primus, 'Big Foot Mary' Drumming by Onwin, Onwin on drums 1 yr later July 1 '57 age 2 1/2"

PPCAud24 Unidentified*

Audiocassettes, 1973-1989 and undated

Box 14

PPCAud25 Sides 1 and 2: "321X Class 3/13/73"*

PPCAud26 Sides 1 and 2: "Lecture"*

PPCAud27 Side 1: "For transcript, Dance Studies"; Side 2: "African Dance Studies for transcription 7/9/75, Fanga"*

PPCAud28 Side 1: "Explaining Talking Drum by Timi of [Cede] 8/5/73" [Side 2 blank]*

PPCAud29 Side 1: "The Gay Flamingoes, Secrets of the Pan, 4 Selections"; Side 2: Unidentified*

PPCAud30 Sides 1 and 2: "Spring 74 Lect[ure] at Sus Valley School"*

PPCAud31 Side 1: "Praise Song 8/17/73 Osun"; [Side 2 blank]*

PPCAud32 Side 1: "Notes on Artifacts, BOCES Stamford NY"; [Side 2 blank]*

PPCAud33 Side 1 and 2 "Others"* [Side 2 only on reference CD]

PPCAud34 Sides 1 and 2: "Summer Institute in Ethnic Studies Through the Arts"*

PPCAud35 Sides 1 and 2: "Festac 77 [2nd World Black and African Festival of Art and Culture, January 1977]"*

PPCAud36 Side 1: "Arabo's Younger Brother 8/10/75"; Side 2: "Lagos 1st Bata Narrative"*

PPCAud37 Side 1: "1-216 WA [preau] 107 Caribbean-137"

PPCAud38 Side 1: "Discipline Bai T. Moon 8/12, Cultural Center 'in the Bush' 8/13"; Side 2: "Cultural Center 8/13 Lect[ure] Demo[nstration]"

PPCAud39 Sides 1 and 2: "Hi Life and JuJu Music"

PPCAud40 Side 1: "8/9 5[?]-1st Part, Egon Gun-2nd part"; Side 2: "Egon Gun Lagos, Low Battery-8/9/75"

PPCAud41 Side 1: "Italian-B and B Fall 1973 project" [Side 2 blank]

PPCAud42 Side 1: "Wisconsin #1-Superior"; Side 2: "Superior Wisconsin 1971"

PPCAud43 Side 1: "Why Mosquitoes Buzz"

PPCAud44 Side 1: "Lect[ure] 292, 1st pt of Report, W.A., 71"; Side 2: "Report 1971 (cont)"

PPCAud45 Side 1: "African Rhythms"; Side 2: "Lecture Caribbean Music-4/18/79 M101...Blank"

PPCAud46 Side 1: "Paraverbal Meeting 11/3/89"

PPCAud47 Side 1: "292B Black Theatre"; Side 2 "292B Africa Theatre"

PPCAud48 Side 1: "Drama/Dance Nigeria Dundun Set"; Side 2: "Yoruba Class 8/1/73"

PPCAud49 Side 1: "5/8/74 [A Allvelty?]; Side 2: "French Class"

PPCAud50 Side 1: "Boroff"

PPCAud51 Unidentified

PPCAud52 Unidentified

PPCAud53 Side 1: "Lect at Chicago [?] Forks-10/16/75"; Side 2: "Cheuougo Forks Lect 10/21/75"

PPCAud54 Side 1: "Seminar on Report 11/22"

PPCAud55 Side 1: "African Article Report 11/17"; Side 2: "Asleiti Conference 11/17"

PPCAud56 Side 1: "PSU Lect Oregon 6/21"; Side 2: "Lect-P.S.U."

PPCAud57 Sides 1 and 2: "Radical Liberal Arts May 1988"

PPCAud58 Side 1: "AA/Thea 137 and 207 c/w 5/8/74"

PPCAud59 Side 1: "Tue Dije 8/9/73"; Side 2: "Yoruba"

PPCAud60 Sides 1 and 2: "Ron Christopher st"

PPCAud61 Side 1: "Nigerian Music Examples Spirit Movement (background music for slides and skit)"

PPCAud62 Sides 1 and 2: "Langston Hughes/Miles Davis/Billie Holiday"

PPCAud63 Sides 1 and 2: "Billie Holiday"

Long-Playing Records

Box 15

PPCAud64 *Pearl Primus' Africa**

PPCAud65 *The Talking Drums**

PPCAud66 *Drums of Haiti**

PPCAud67 *Negro Folk Music of Africa and America**

PPCAud68 *African Dances and Games**

Artifacts, 1974-1991 and undated

Extent: 2.92 linear feet

Contains seven plaques, awarded for achievement in modern dance, anthropology, and teaching, and the 1991 Medal of Arts, awarded by President George H. W. Bush. This series also contains three female and one male ballet slippers, assumed to have belonged to Primus and her husband, Percival, and three dance costumes presumably worn by Primus. Notable is the one identifiable costume, worn by Primus during performances of *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* and *Strange Fruit* in the mid-1940s.

Box 17

Appreciation presented by African Heritage Class and African-American Heritage Dance Club, 1974

Outstanding Pioneer Award presented by Audelco, 1977

Ernest Melby Award presented by NYU Alumni Association, 1986

Honorary Citizen of Atlanta, 1989

Distinguished Achievement Award presented by Association of Black Anthropologists, 1991

National Medal of Arts, 1991

Olaudah Equiano Award of Excellence, University of Utah, 1994

Ballet shoes (three women's and one men's)

Brown woven circle

P. Borde name Tag

Rosary

Woodblock stamp of image from *African Ceremonial*

Wooden comb

Box 18

Costumes. Restricted.

Black striped skirt with pink trim, from *Negro Speaks of Rivers* and *Strange Fruit*

Blue and purple velvet dress with leaves

Purple dress